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MESSAGE FORM

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20 Dec 1971

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FILE, VR, DCT, D/DCT, E/DIR, DDP, ADDP, (classification) (elite) (pica) (reference number)

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FOR ONLY FROM

(REQUEST DELIVER AS SOON AS CONVENIENTLY POSSIBLE)

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WE

1. WILL NOT BURDEN YOU WITH WHO STRUCK JOHN DETAILS, BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT ANTICIPATED NVA NORTH LAOS OFFENSIVE KICKED OFF IN SPADES ON 18 DECEMBER. NVA INFANTRY AND HEAVY WEAPONS UNITS, SUPPORTED BY TANKS AND HIGHLY ACCURATE ARTILLERY FIRE (INCLUDING 130 MM FIELD GUNS) OPENED WITH SIMULTANEOUS ATTACKS ON ALL IRREGULAR POSITIONS AND FIRE SUPPORT BASES ON NORTHERN AND EASTERN EDGES OF PDJ. AT THIS WRITING, ENEMY IS STILL PRESSING HIS ALL OUT ATTACK, WHICH IS CLEARLY DESIGNED (AT MINIMUM) TO SWEEP THE PLAINE.

2. GIVEN FLUIDITY OF SITUATION AND INTENSITY OF COMBAT, CURRENT PICTURE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR. FRIENDLY FORCES HAVE ESSENTIALLY BEEN DRIVEN OFF THE PLAINE AND ARE NOW TRYING TO FORM A NEW DEFENSIVE LINE ALONG PDJ'S SOUTHWESTERN RIM. MEO UNITS RETREATED IN CONSIDERABLE DISARRAY AFTER INITIAL SHOCK. WE DO NOT

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PRESENTLY KNOW EXTENT TO WHICH THEY CAN BE REGROUPED AND RE-FORMED. [REDACTED] UNITS GAVE GENERALLY EXCELLENT ACCOUNT OF THEMSELVES AND SEEM TO HAVE WITHDRAWN (OVERLAND) IN DISCIPLINED GOOD ORDER. MOST OF FRIENDLIES' HEAVY EQUIPMENT INCLUDING ARTILLERY, HOWEVER, WAS DESTROYED OR ABANDONED. AS NEAR AS WE CAN TELL, FRIENDLIES IN PDJ AREA (INCLUDING LONG TIENG) NOW HAVE ONLY FOUR ARTILLERY ^{TUBES} FUSES, TWO 105'S AND TWO 155'S.

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3. AIR HAS BEEN PROBLEM. AS [REDACTED] PUT IT IN 19 DECEMBER

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TELECON, QUOTE IN LIGHT OF INTENSITY AND PERSISTENCE OF NVA ATTACK UPON OUR KEY POSITIONS, AND PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF HEAVY ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT, VICIOUS AAA FIRE THROUGHOUT SECTOR, AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST ENEMY UTILIZATION ARMOR, OUR ONLY HOPE OF REDRESSING THE BALANCE IS THRU EXPLOITATION TACAIR AND ARCLIGHTS UNQUOTE. PROBLEM HAS BEEN THAT FOR FIRST TWO DAYS OF OFFENSIVE USAF HAS HAD TO GIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION AND RESOURCES TO SNR (FIVE F-4'S DOWN OVER LAOS SINCE 17 OCT). BY MONDAY 20 DECEMBER, HOWEVER, PDJ

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SITUATION WAS GETTING PRIORITY TACAIR EFFORT FROM MACV. [REDACTED] AND [REDACTED] SPENT MOST OF WEEKEND WORKING ON AIR PROBLEM, TALKING TO VIENTIANE TO GET FIX ON NEEDS AND TO CONCERNED OFFICES HERE (SECDEF, MOORER, JCS, NMCC) TO DO WHATEVER PRODUCTIVELY POSSIBLE AT THIS END TO GET THESE NEEDS MET. THINGS SEEM TO BE IMPROVING SOMEWHAT IN THIS CRITICAL AREA.

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4. LAOS SITUATION HAS BEEN FULLY COVERED IN PDB, REGULAR PUBLICATIONS AND SPECIAL SITREPS. WE WILL ENSURE THAT KEY CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND STAFF AIDES ARE APPROPRIATELY INFORMED. [REDACTED] SAW GENERAL HAIG 20 DECEMBER TO BE SURE HE FULLY BRIEFED AND TO TAKE WHITE HOUSE TEMPERATURE. CONVERSATION WAS VERY CORDIAL WITH NO HINT OF QUOTE WHY DIDN'T YOU WARN US UNQUOTE FLAVOR. BOTH AGREED COMMUNIST PDJ DRIVE WAS CLEARLY IN CARDS AS FOLLOW ON TO CAMBODIAN PRESSURE. BOLOVENS WOULD PROBABLY BE THEN NEXT, THEN B 3 FRONT, TURN POSSIBLY DMZ AREA. HANOI'S OBJECT WAS TO CREATE MAXIMUM NOISE AND IMAGE OF APPARENT STRENGTH PRIOR,

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TO PRESIDENT'S FEBRUARY DEPARTURE FOR PEKING. HAIG HAD WARM PRAISE FOR [] AND FOR AMBASSADOR GODLEY, WHOSE GUTS AND DRIVE HE DESCRIBED AS MAJOR US ASSET. CLEARLY REFLECTING WHITE HOUSE ATTITUDE, HAIG CONTRASTED PLUS FACETS OF GODLEY WITH MINUS QUALITIES OF [], DESCRIBING LATTER AS FLUTTERY, WEAK REED. HAIG SAID [] LAOS COVERAGE WAS JUST WHAT WHITE HOUSE NEEDED IN TERMS SCOPE, FREQUENCY AND DETAIL. HE AGREED TO ADVISE [] IF ANY CHANGES DESIRED AND ALSO AGREED THAT SILENCE ON HIS PART COULD CORRECTLY BE CONSTRUED AS SIGN OF CONTINUED WHITE HOUSE SATISFACTION.

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5. SINCE THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO, WE WILL NOT TROUBLE YOU WITH FURTHER SITREPS. ABOVE FOR YOUR BACKGROUND IN CASE GARBLED GLOOM STORIES SURFACE IN LOCAL MEDIA. IN FIELD AND AT HQS EVERYTHING THAT CAN BE DONE, WILL BE. MERRY CHRISTMAS.

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[]

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END OF MESSAGE

CF

DDP

ExDir-Compt

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- Chief, WH

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